

More Holes in Bosnia

The publication of the article in the present form was only possible with the cooperation of the late Jim Hewgill. He preferred this title, which, as he wrote, keeps the joke going. Unfortunately he wasn't able to look through the final version.

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During the sixth UPU Congress in Rome 1906 the members agreed to accept stamps which were perforated in a special way by marking them with small holes. The postal administrations were allowed to impose additional requirements to the use of these so called PERforated INitials (PERFINS). For example, companies weren't allowed to use these marking for promotional purposes.

By 1906 many countries, including Bosnia and the Herzegovina, had already allowed these Perfins for years. But in the handbooks you will find hardly any reference to their existence.

The history of Perfins started in England. Merchants were confronted with theft of

stamps from their stocks by their own employees. Mr. Joseph Sloper was successful in inventing a perforating device. In 1868 he requested from the Postmaster General permission to mark English postage stamps for companies as a way to prevent theft.

The Perfins proved to be successful as a combative measure and soon other countries introduced Perfins too. The date when Austria introduced Perfins isn't known to me, but we find in the *Handbuch für den ausübenden Postdienst* of Barth (1900) this text: 'Die Verwendung durchlochter Marken ist, sofern dieselben nicht gebraucht kenntlich geblieben sind, gestattet' (The Utilization of stamps with perforated markings is permitted, providing that they remain recognizably unused).

For historical notes about the occupation of Bosnia and the Herzegovina, reference can be made to earlier issues of *Austria*. The economic development, far behind that of other parts of Europe may be an important reason for the fact that only a few different Perfins are found.

The long-lasting Turkish domination led to the low level of economic development in Bosnia and the Herzegovina, although natural resources were available. Most roads were dilapidated. Only Banja Luka and Doberlin were connected by a railway. This railway should have been the beginning of a Turkish line between Constantinople and Paris, but after a few years the development of this line was stopped. Trade of any importance was far from easy under these circumstances and hardly a sign of industrial development could be found.

The military occupation was, in this respect, an improvement. The infrastructure was, due to the military needs, greatly

strengthened. The north-south railway was of the utmost importance and connected Hungary (including Croatia/Slavonia) with the Adriatic. A major part of transport in the nineteenth century was dependent on this railway.

A branch by Doboj lead in an eastern direction to the coal- and salt- mines in the neighborhood of Tuzla. Some years later (1895) the line between Podlugovi-Vares was opened. Large stocks of iron ore were also available in this mining district.

Industry, at first almost only Mohammed home industry, developed slowly to more modern production methods. some examples can be mentioned: a sugar factory in Usora, cellulose factory in Drvar, iron- and steel works in Zenica and Vares.

In 1910, Bosnia and the Herzegovina had about 2 million inhabitants. But still 90% of the population was dependent for their earnings on agriculture and cattle-breeding.

Forestry used to be the most important export industry. The north-western part of Bosnia was almost completely enclosed by the German industrialist Otto von Steinbeis. Large saw-mills were set up in Doberlin an Petrovac. The cellulose-factory was also part of the 'Bosnian Forst-Industrie-Aktien Gesellschaft.'

Against this background a score of 23 different perfins seems not too bad. Most of them are from banks.

Editor's note: The remainder of this article describes the tabular for of the 23 perfins and shows examples. These have been previously published in *The Perfins Bulletin* and therefore they have not been repeated here.